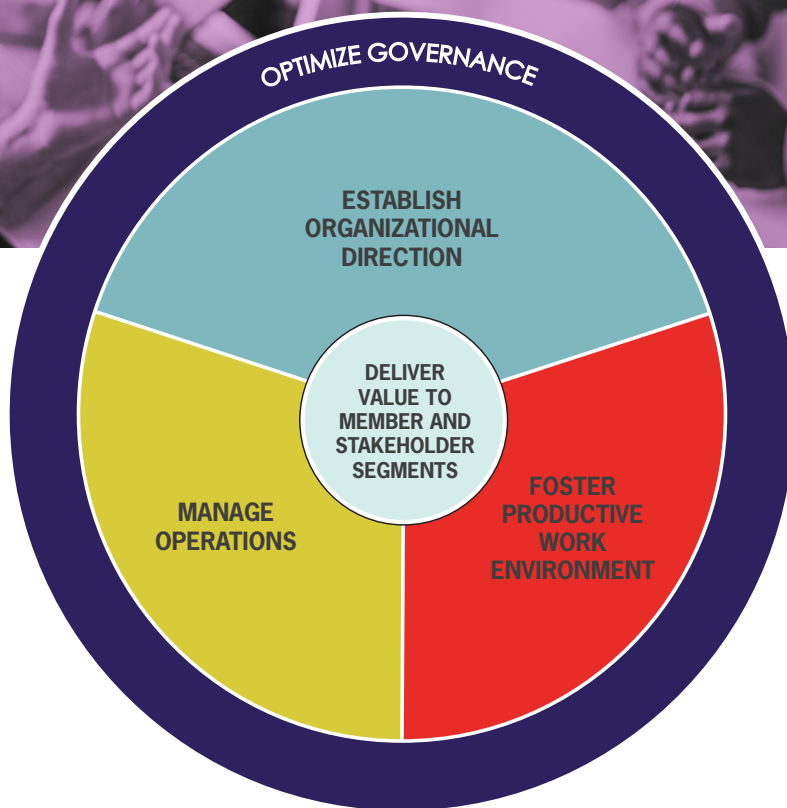


# COMPETENCIES FOR ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES



CANADIAN SOCIETY OF ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES  
SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DES DIRECTEURS D'ASSOCIATION

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# INTRODUCTION

*Competencies for Association Executives* is intended to provide executives with a guide to performance in senior leadership positions within the not-for-profit sector. While the size, objectives and budget of associations vary, the fundamentals of the role do not. These competencies are the foundation of the Certified Association Executive® (CAE) program.

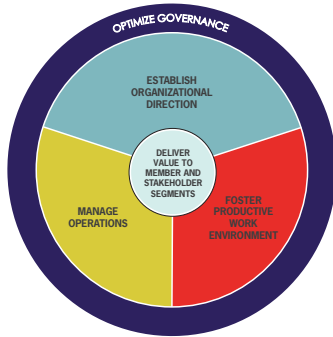
This document covers the critical tasks and key outcomes of the chief staff officer in the not-for-profit sector. In addition to the competencies outlined in this document, the most effective association executives:

- Develop domain/sector expertise
- Commit to lifelong learning
- Are open to change
- Acquire the following skills:
  - Strategic and critical thinking
  - Interpersonal communication
  - Relationship management
  - Coaching and feedback
  - Self-management

This document has several intended uses:

- An assessment tool to determine key strengths and areas of development
- A guide to professional development
- A succession planning tool
- A guide to developing internal capacity

# COMPETENCIES OVERVIEW



## OPTIMIZE GOVERNANCE

Ensure an effective and efficient governance structure  
Contribute to the effectiveness of the board and committees  
Lead development of a strategic plan  
Advise the board on issues requiring their input  
*Key Outcomes*

## ESTABLISH ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTION

Develop a long-term financial strategy  
Develop and manage an annual operational plan  
Develop and manage an annual budget  
Develop and maintain brand and reputation  
Develop partnerships to achieve organization objectives  
Develop and implement a risk management model  
*Key Outcomes*

## FOSTER A PRODUCTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Manage human resource requirements  
Recruit and onboard staff and volunteers  
Build a positive staff and volunteer culture  
Manage individual performance  
Foster collaboration and innovation  
Manage change  
*Key Outcomes*

## MANAGE OPERATIONS

Manage an annual financial audit or review  
Manage facilities and equipment  
Manage information and communications technology  
Develop operational processes, policies and procedures  
Manage documentation  
*Key Outcomes*

## DELIVER VALUE TO MEMBER AND STAKEHOLDER SEGMENTS

Think beyond membership  
Identify needs of member and stakeholder segments  
Ensure appropriate mix of products and services  
Establish and support growth targets  
*Key Outcomes*

# OPTIMIZE GOVERNANCE

## ENSURE AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

- Advise on organization bylaws and policies that define the governance structure
- Clarify the scope of authority for staff and directors in conjunction with the board
- Maintain accurate governance records, including minutes, bylaws and policies
- Ensure reporting obligations to board and members are met
- Establish risk principles with the board
- Establish an effective policy framework

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BOARD AND COMMITTEES

- Advise on role descriptions for directors, including competencies, and authority
- Support the election process for new board members
- Advise on a board succession plan to ensure a balance of new and experienced directors
- Advise on ongoing board recruitment to ensure skills, experience and diversity
- Advise on orientation, mentoring and ongoing training of board members
- Facilitate process for the ongoing evaluation of the board, committees and individual board (committee) members

## LEAD DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGIC PLAN

- Advise on creating a mission and vision for the organization
- Conduct an ongoing environmental scan
- Provide input on stakeholder segments
- Provide input on formulation of strategy
- Plan for evaluation of performance against the strategic plan

## ADVISE THE BOARD ON ISSUES REQUIRING THEIR INPUT

- Plan and prepare for board and committee meetings in partnership with the board/ committee chair
- Prepare effective reports and presentations to the board
- Ensure compliance with requirements related to incorporation and non-profit and/or charitable status
- Advise on liability insurance and indemnification
- Advise on compliance issues and evolving legislative requirements

## KEY OUTCOMES

- Board position descriptions
- Strong nominations and elections process
- Strategic plan including mission and vision
- Board policies and procedures
- Membership policies and procedures
- Board policies and procedures
- Annual report or other reports to board and members
- Annual board evaluation
- Governance records including AGM and members' meeting minutes

# ESTABLISH ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTION

## DEVELOP A LONG-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

- Assess potential impact of future economic conditions
- Project future capital expenditures and sources of income
- Determine impact of economic forecast on strategic and operational plans
- Plan for organization sustainability and growth

## DEVELOP AND MANAGE AN ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN

- Translate strategic plan into specific priorities, actions and deliverables with timelines
- Allocate human and financial resources
- Establish key performance indicators

## DEVELOP AND MANAGE AN ANNUAL BUDGET

- Prepare cost and revenue estimates using recent actuals and vendor quotes
- Anticipate upcoming changes plus priority initiatives and forecast expenditures
- Ensure plans align with expenditure and revenue targets
- Manage cash flow and investments
- Track accurate monthly data against planned expenditures and revenue
- Adjust expenses and activities as required

## DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN BRAND AND REPUTATION

- Identify and profile audiences (such as members, partners, government, public)
- Determine appropriate strategies to achieve organization goals (such as marketing, government relations, public relations strategies)
- Oversee the development of positioning statements and messaging standards
- Communicate on behalf of the organization
- Establish a crisis management protocol
- Establish and track evaluation measures

## DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE ORGANIZATION OBJECTIVES

- Clarify the intent and objectives of the partnership
- Develop collaboration agreements
- Communicate effectively with partners
- Manage change throughout the project and/or partnership term

## ASSESS PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE STATED OBJECTIVES

- Develop and implement a risk management model
- Assess potential problems and opportunities inherent in strategic and operational plans
- Establish risk principles and guidelines for staff
- Plan actions for reducing operational threats and increasing probability of opportunities
- Plan actions for mitigating problems or seizing opportunities that occur
- Leverage risk to create opportunity and value

*Continued...*

# ESTABLISH ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTION

## KEY OUTCOMES

- Annual operational plan
- Annual budget and financial statements
- Marketing and communications plans
- Risk management plan
- Monitoring reports/dashboard
- Key messages on behalf of the organization
- Collaboration agreements with partners

# FOSTER A PRODUCTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

## MANAGE HUMAN RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

- Determine competencies/skills/knowledge required to achieve organization goals
- Assess when to develop staff and when to acquire external capabilities
- Determine competitive compensation packages for internal positions
- Ensure compliance with payroll, employment, workplace safety and liability legislation
- Plan for developing individuals through formal and informal learning
- Match people to tasks, ensuring the right mix of skills
- Plan succession for key roles within the organization

## RECRUIT AND ONBOARD STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

- Build job descriptions/profiles for staff and key volunteer positions
- Develop recruitment plans for staff and volunteer positions
- Develop and implement interview and selection processes
- Develop job offers, including remuneration and benefits
- Develop and implement onboarding processes for staff and volunteers

## BUILD A POSITIVE STAFF AND VOLUNTEER CULTURE

- Establish staff and volunteer codes of conduct
- Establish clarity of roles between staff and volunteers
- Recognize and reward staff and volunteer effort, contributions and successes

## MANAGE INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE

- Establish and cascade goals/objectives, ensuring clear accountabilities
- Monitor/measure performance on an ongoing basis
- Provide effective feedback and coaching
- Manage low performance, taking corrective action, as required

## FOSTER COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

- Clarify expectations regarding collaboration
- Manage tension between collaboration and individual accountability
- Build an environment that encourages and supports risk-taking and learning from mistakes
- Develop incentives, recognition and rewards that support innovation and collaboration
- Involve others in decisions to access information, generate ideas and build commitment

## MANAGE CHANGE

- Assess the impact of change on people and processes
- Translate change initiatives into operating plans
- Build momentum for change through a shared vision of the future
- Manage resistance by coaching individuals through change
- Sustain and reinforce changes after the initial implementation
- Measure success of implementation and adjust as required

## KEY OUTCOMES

- Right people hired, retained, promoted or terminated
- People have skills and knowledge to do the work assigned
- Employee and volunteer productivity
- Employee and volunteer satisfaction/engagement



# MANAGE OPERATIONS

## MANAGE AN ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT OR REVIEW

- Prepare audit schedule to ensure readiness throughout the organization
- Ensure staff are aware of responsibilities in preparation for and during an audit
- Implement auditor recommendations
- Support selection and periodic review of the audit firm

## MANAGE FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

- Determine current and future facility, equipment and service requirements
- Ensure all statutory requirements, including accessibility, are met
- Develop and maintain safety and security plans
- Maintain an equipment inventory, including service agreements
- Ensure ongoing compliance with statutory and fiduciary obligations

## MANAGE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

- Determine current and future technology and database requirements
- Plan database analytics uses and requirements
- Ensure data security risks are minimized
- Implement new technologies as required
- Adapt business rules to support technology implementations

## DEVELOP OPERATIONAL PROCESSES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Ensure processes, policies and procedures comply with statutory requirements, including certifications
- Ensure processes, policies and procedures reflect the organizational governance, mission and vision
- Ensure continuous process review and improvement
- Streamline processes and business rules to optimize productivity and comply with requirements

## MANAGE DOCUMENTATION

- Ensure development, storage, disposal of documentation complies with statutory requirements
- Ensure policies, procedures, technology and facilities support documentation requirements

## KEY OUTCOMES

- Budget, financial statements, audited financial statements
- Sufficient cash flow to meet financial obligations
- Optimal return on investments
- Effective and efficient facilities and equipment
- Database reports for use in decision-making
- Policies and procedures documented and compliant
- Processes streamlined and compliant

# DELIVER VALUE TO MEMBER AND STAKEHOLDER SEGMENTS

## DEFINE SEGMENTS

- Identify member segments
- Identify additional stakeholder segments beyond membership
- Explore opportunities to provide value to segments
- Identify potential revenue opportunities

## IDENTIFY NEEDS OF MEMBER AND STAKEHOLDER SEGMENTS

- Select approaches for collecting data (such as surveys, focus groups, interviews)
- Analyze data to identify opportunities and threats
- Identify priority opportunities and gaps to address
- Define member and stakeholder segment value propositions
- Determine activities required to deliver value propositions

## ENSURE APPROPRIATE MIX OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Assess current products and services
- Retire poorly performing products or services
- Identify opportunities to develop or modify products/services
- Advise on the development of project plan and critical path to launch product/service
- Validate value of products and services with community
- Support all decisions with a business case
- Establish performance metrics for all products or services

## ESTABLISH AND SUPPORT GROWTH TARGETS

- Establish membership, product and service targets linked to operational plan and annual budget
- Establish member recruitment and retention strategies
- Approve marketing and communications vehicles
- Approve approach for soliciting stakeholder/member (including lapsed members) feedback
- Evaluate results against membership, product or service targets

## KEY OUTCOMES

- Member and stakeholder segment value propositions and related activities
- Business plan to develop new product or modify existing products/services
- Product or service plan to bring to market
- New or modified products brought to market
- Poor performing products retired as needed
- Membership, product or service revenue targets met/exceeded